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The University of Dayton

News Release

May 19, 1992
Contact: Teri Rizvi

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION AWARD HONORS *CROSS CURRENTS* FOUNDERS

DAYTON, Ohio -- A couple who launched a religious quarterly review on a shoestring more than 40 years ago will receive a national communication award from the University of Dayton.

Joe and Sally Cunneen, a West Nyack, N.Y., couple who founded *Cross Currents*, have been tapped to receive the Daniel J. Kane Religious Communications Award on June 18 during the University's annual Pastoral Communications Institute. Named after the former director of communications for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the national award honors people who have made significant contributions to religious communications in the U.S.

"They had this vision for a brave, new periodical and never lost that vision," said Kane, who nominated the couple. "Their work is highly respected and applauded by their colleagues in the press," said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., executive director of UD's Center for Religious Telecommunications.

The Cunneens began *Cross Currents* in December 1950 to "explore the implications of Christianity for our times" and "to provide in one journal the best in contemporary religious thought," according to a May 26, 1990, feature article in *America*.

In 1990, *Cross Currents* moved from offices at Mercy College to the College of New Rochelle, where it merged with the journal of the Association of Religion and Intellectual Life, a fellowship of Christian and Jews. Joe Cunneen is one of three editors of the new journal, *Cross Currents: Religion and Intellectual Life*, and writes a monthly movie review column for the *National Catholic Reporter*. Sally Cunneen, the author of *Mother Church: What the Experience of Women is Teaching Her*, which was published by Paulist Press in

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1991, is a professor of English at Rockland County Community College in Suffern, N.Y. She remains on the editorial board of the journal. From 1971-1989, she served as a contributing editor for *Christian Century*.

"It's a little intimidating but exciting for us to receive this award," said Joe Cunneen in a telephone interview. "I think perhaps we're being rewarded beyond our merit."

Despite financial uncertainties, the journal has persevered out of "stubbornness," said Cunneen, who has worked as a senior editor at Holt, Rinehart and Winston and taught at five universities, most recently Mercy College, during his career. "We get credit because we've survived. It was a matter of knowing that there were immense riches in the Christian tradition, that others had only scratched the surface. We were able to tap into some pretty exciting movements after World War II."

The journal has never shied away from controversy. In the early 1950s, writers explored the relationship between religion, psychiatry and psychoanalysis. The magazine has also examined the Catholic position on contraception, the status and role of women in the church and the Catholic church's emergence in the third world.

In *America*, Catholic journalist John Deedy described *Cross Current's* impact: "Defying every rule of economics and every fluctuation of interest in religious values, the Cunneens have for 40 years worked their quarterly miracle of producing yet another intellectually stimulating issue. They have profited not a cent from their independent publishing enterprise, yet theirs is one of the grand success stories of American religious publishing--that is, if success is to be measured also by intellectual and apostolic yardsticks."

The Cunneens have three sons. Sally Cunneen received a B.A. in history and literature from the University of Toronto in 1947, an M.A. in English literature from Fordham University in 1964 and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1978. Joe Cunneen received a B.A. in English from Holy Cross College in 1942, an M.A. in drama from Catholic University in 1947 and completed doctoral course work in comparative drama at Columbia University in 1959.

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For interviews, contact **Joe and Sally Cunneen** at (914) 358-4898. **Joe Cunneen** can also be reached at (914) 632-5300. **Sally Cunneen** can be contacted at (914) 574-4703. For information about the Daniel J. Kane Religious Communications Award, contact Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., executive director of the University of Dayton's Center for Religious Telecommunications, at (513) 229-3126.